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ABSTRACT

Students graduating from early childhood programs at a southeastern urban university in June 1992 and June 1993 completed the Educational Attitudes Inventory and the Teacher Efficacy Scale upon entry to the program, before entry to a practicum experience with kindergarten students, and upon completion of both the practicum experience and a student teaching experience in grades 1-4. Forty-eight students were in a master's level initial certification program and 59 were in a traditional undergraduate program. Analysis of subjects' attitudes and performance in relation to the economic diversity and context of student teaching placements revealed that: (1) having a teacher-centered attitude had a negative relationship with personal teaching efficacy; (2) having a student-centered attitude was not a predictor of performance; (3) the key to improving student performance may be in reducing the teacher-centered dimension rather than increasing student-centered attitude; (4) being placed in schools serving larger numbers of poor children negatively affected students' practicum performance but positively affected student teaching performance, perhaps because students more skilled in teaching poorer children chose such placements for student teaching; (5) less than adequate context, relationships with cooperating teachers, and classroom role models had a negative effect on the performance of practicum students; and (6) school context was not a significant factor for student teaching performance. (Contains 26 references.) (JDD)

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND CONTEXT OF STUDENT TEACHING PLACEMENTS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTITUDES AND PERFORMANCE OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April, 1994.

INTRODUCTION

A generally accepted and understood goal for teacher education is the development of teachers capable of working with diverse student populations. The primary method for achieving the goal is placing students in field experiences in schools with diverse populations. Diversity is sometimes defined broadly, but its most typical application is in terms of racial/ethnic/economic differences. Regardless of student diversity, the context of field experiences also has been posited to have a strong influence on teacher socialization. The objective of this paper is to present findings from a study about relationships among economic diversity and context of student teaching and educational attitudes and performance.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

School Context. Consideration of the school context must be set within a teacher socialization framework. One socialization paradigm identified by Zeichner (1990) is the interpretive paradigm in which socialization is the product of interaction between the school and the individual. The key term is "interaction;" school context may inhibit or encourage certain actions or attitudes, but the teacher's personal characteristics interact with those factors to produce the school context effect. Blase (1990) refers to this phenomenon as a redefinition of self within the institutional context.

Hoy and Feldman (1987) averred that school context had two constructs: 1) affective context which is the ambience of the school created by such things as teacher morale and 2) objective context which is the socio-economic status of the school. Zeichner (1984) found that the following factors influenced the development of teachers' perspectives: teacher-pupil ratio, material resources, authority relations, school values and ideals, and collegial influence. Driscoll and Kulman (1989) posited dual influences in teacher socialization: 1) personal which includes teacher education program and teacher attitudes and 2) organizational which includes other teachers and school environment. They also found that first year teachers who went through a school-based alternative program were proactive and interactive in their socialization and not unduly influenced by negative factors. Hoy and Woolfolk (1990) had student teachers rate school context based on support from college supervisors, other student teachers, cooperating teacher, and other teachers in the school. They found no interaction between context and efficacy or custodial attitude but did find a decrease in teaching efficacy and an increase in custodial attitudes. McNeely and Mertz (1990) obtained similar findings.

Kagan (1992) reviewed current research on the role of context in teacher socialization. She reported four contextual factors affecting growth and success. The teaching assignment (the nature of the content and pupils to be taught); colleagues' willingness to

provide support; parental relationships; and degree of autonomy and leadership afforded teachers.

Teacher Attitudes. Shaw and Wright (1967) defined the term attitude as "a relatively enduring system of evaluative, affective reactions based upon and reflecting the evaluative concepts or beliefs which have been learned about the characteristics of a social object or class of social objects" (p. 3).

Harvey, Prather, White, Alter, and Hoffmeister (1966) and Rose and Medway (1981) found that teachers with different attitudes vary in their teaching behaviors. Bunting's research (1984, 1985) used the labels "student-centered" and "directive" to classify teachers' educational attitudes. She found that teachers who were more student-centered used instructional techniques that encourage active and direct student involvement in learning, allowed students to predict, infer, generalize, and evaluate as well as make decisions about their educational instruction. The directive label corresponds to more teacher-centered behavior, suggesting a custodial approach to classroom management and a reliance on conservative instructional techniques. Pajares (1992) provided empirical and theoretical support for the influence of beliefs (such as efficacy and educational attitude) on teacher behavior.

Though most teacher education programs stress the desirability of democratic, humanistic, progressive approaches to education, considerable evidence (Lanier & Little, 1986; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) indicated that many of the effects of teacher education on attitudes and beliefs are temporary. As beginning teachers become socialized into the profession, they often leave behind the innovative practices and progressive attitudes developed during their preservice experiences (Cooney, 1985; Etheridge, 1987), although some studies (Jordell, 1987; Lawson, 1992; McDaniel, 1991; Pigge & Marso, 1987; Weinstein, 1990) have reported that teachers' attitudes are relatively stable in the first year.

Teacher's Sense of Efficacy. Teacher's sense of efficacy is a multidimensional construct consisting of at least two dimensions that correspond to Bandura's (1977) two-component model of self-efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tracz & Gibson, 1986). In applying Bandura's model to teachers and teacher efficacy, Gibson and Dembo (1984) referred to Bandura's outcome expectancy as the degree to which teachers believe that students can be taught given such factors as family background, academic ability and school conditions (teaching efficacy). They characterized personal teaching efficacy as the teacher's evaluation of their own ability to bring about positive student change and motivation, corresponding to Bandura's second construct of efficacy.

Research by Ashton and Webb (1986) found that teachers' beliefs in students' educability were negatively related to teachers' use of strong control tactics and positively related to supportive, interactive styles permitting open communication and involvement of students in decision making. Teachers' beliefs in their personal teaching efficacy were positively related to teachers' maintenance of a secure, accepting classroom climate,

support of student initiative, and concern with meeting the needs of all students.

Teacher efficacy and student achievement were found to be significantly related in numerous research studies (Armor, et.al., 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly & Zellman, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tracz & Gibson, 1986). Teacher efficacy also has been related to better teaching practices with low-achieving students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Ashton & Webb, 1982).

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects of this study were students graduating from early childhood programs at a southeastern urban university in June, 1992 and June, 1993. Forty eight students were in a master's level initial certification program, and 59 were in a traditional undergraduate program. Average student age at program entry was 29.41. Gender distribution was 94.4% female and 5.6% (5) male. The group included two 2 Asian students (1.9%) and seven African American students (5.6%).

Measurements

Educational Attitudes Inventory. The Educational Attitudes Inventory (EAI) (Bunting, 1988) is made up of two factor-analytically derived scales describing student-centered/progressive and teacher-centered/directive teaching views. Item responses on the EAI are in the form of a Likert type scale with a five-point continuum of options. The progressive scale has a maximum score of 95 points; the directive scale has a maximum score of 75 points. Split-half reliability measures for the two scales are .89 for the progressive scale and .73 for the directive scale.

Teacher Efficacy Scale. The Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) measures two aspects of efficacy. Personal teaching efficacy is defined as a self-evaluation of one's ability to bring about positive student change. Teaching efficacy is defined as the belief that students are capable of learning regardless of home environment, motivation and other factors. The scale was tested for internal consistency and yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .78 for personal teaching efficacy and .75 for teaching efficacy for 16 of 30 items. Because acceptable reliability coefficients resulted from only 16 of an original 30 items (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), only those 16 items were used. Maximum score for personal teaching efficacy is 54 and for teaching efficacy is 37.

School Context. The contexts of school placements were measured through students' reports. Students rated their placements based on physical school context, affective school context, physical classroom context, affective classroom context, student behavior, cooperating teacher as a role model, cooperating teacher's treatment of children, the relationship between the student and the cooperating teacher, and overall performance of the supervising teacher. The measures created a school context rating

(range 4-20), classroom context rating (3-15), and teacher rating (4-20). The high correlations for these measures allowed combining the scores for one context measure (range 11-55).

The socioeconomic status of the school was based on the percentage of students eligible for the Chapter I Program. These data came from the Georgia Department of Education, Office of Statistical Services.

Performance. Each student participated in two full time field experiences, one in kindergarten (practicum) and one in grades 1-4 (student teaching). Performances in both experiences were rated using instruments in Student Teaching: An Interactive Approach (Galina & Jordan, 1991), a program developed for an urban university's early childhood program. Student teaching performance was rated once a week in the following areas: transitions and routines; small group instruction; large group instruction; student assessment; interpersonal skills; planning; organization; teaching skills; management of time, resources, and environment; and professionalism. The college supervisor's weekly observation and cooperating teacher and student teacher reports of events during the week formed the basis for the rating. Each assessment category has a list of factors to be considered in rating performance. College supervisors are trained in the use of the rating system by watching it being administered for one quarter and then being watched and advised while using it another quarter. All college supervisors meet each quarter and rate video tapes of student teachers and compare ratings for reliability. At the end of student teaching each student has a "score" which is the percentage of all possible points in all categories.

Data Collection

Students completed the EAI and Teacher Efficacy Scale upon entry to the program, before entry to the practicum experience, and upon completion of both student teaching experiences.

Students rated school context for practicum and student teaching experiences. School SES was determined for each student's school for each experience.

Statistical Analyses

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed for all pairs of variables. The variables are: (a) performance in practicum (PRACPER); (b) performance in student teaching (STPER); (c) teacher-centered educational attitude (EAIT 1,2,3); (d) student-centered educational attitude (EAIS 1,2,3); (e) teaching efficacy (EFFT 1,2,3); (f) personal teaching efficacy (EFFP 1,2,3); (g) practicum socio-economic status of school (PRACSES); (h) student teaching socio-economic status of school (STSES); (i) student teaching context of school (STCXT); and (j) practicum context of school (PCXT)

The correlation matrix produced is Table 1.

Backward elimination regression analysis was performed for the models outlined in Figure 1. This method was chosen since it is

hypothesized that school context, school SES, and attitudes affect attitudes and performance, but no order of influence is posited. Backward elimination eliminates non-significant variables step by step in a regression equation based on the variable's F value. The process produces the strongest model, one for which all variables have a significant influence on the dependent variable.

Findings

The model with teaching efficacy as the dependent variable was not significant. Student-centered attitude was the only variable related to personal teaching efficacy, explaining 21% of the variance. The most powerful model with personal teaching efficacy at the end of the program as the dependent variable (Tables 1 and 2) included teacher-centered attitude at the end of the program and personal teaching efficacy at end of program. Teacher-centered attitude (a negative relationship) and personal teaching efficacy explained 30% of the variance in student-centered attitude.

The most powerful model with practicum performance as the dependent variable (Tables 3 and 4) includes practicum SES and school context, personal teaching efficacy at end of program and teacher-centered attitude at end of program (a negative relationship). The more traditional, directive the teaching attitude, the lower rated the performance. The model also shows that the lower the school SES, the lower rated the performance in practicum.

The most powerful model with student teaching performance as the dependent variable (Tables 5 and 6) includes student teaching SES and teacher centered attitude at end of program (a negative relationship), accounting for 9% of the variance. Interestingly, the relationship between performance and SES was positive, meaning the lower the school SES, the higher rated the performance.

DISCUSSION. Teacher centered attitude predicted performance, not surprising in an early childhood program focused on student centered teaching and learning. More interesting is that student centered attitude is not a predictor of performance. Mean student centered score indicates that most of the pre-service teachers professed allegiance to more progressive attitudes and since the EAI measures two separate dimensions, the key to better performance may be in reducing the teacher centered dimension rather than increasing student centered attitude.

Low SES had a negative relationship with performance during practicum and a positive relationship with student teaching performance. Being placed in schools serving larger numbers of poor children negatively affected students'practicum performance but positively affected student teaching performance. During student teaching, students requested either an urban or suburban placement. Most of the lower SES schools were urban schools. Students specifically choosing placement in lower SES schools seems to have created a "natural selection" of people who were more skilled and more confident in teaching poorer students.

School context related only to practicum performance. It could be that difficulties in teaching led to a lower assessment of

the placement context based on the need for an explanation for less than anticipated success. Less than adequate context (whether real or perceived), relationships with cooperating teachers, and classroom role models seem to have a negative effect on the performance of practicum students. This finding underlines the importance of good and compatible field placements. School context was not a significant factor for student teaching performance; it may be that student teachers had more confidence and thus were less affected by external factors.

Personal teaching efficacy, confidence in one's ability to teach children, predicted student-centered attitude. A confident teacher may be more of a risk taker who can move away from more traditional, teacher-centered ideas and behavior. Personal efficacy also was predictive of practicum performance but not of student teaching performance. This phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the efficacy measure was taken prior to practicum. An additional measure taken after practicum and before student teaching may have a positive relationship with student teaching performance.

CONCLUSIONS. This study indicates the following:

1. Placing preservice teachers in schools with good morale, pleasant surroundings, a compatible and welcoming cooperating teacher who is a good role model may be just as important as pupils' backgrounds in determining success in full tome field experiences.
2. Letting students choose to work in lower SES schools may enhance chances for success, a conclusion consistent with Haberman's (1987) theories about the importance of selection in educating urban teachers.
3. Students whose attitudes are consistent with teacher education program goals will enhance teaching performance.
4. Further analysis of these data expanding the model by adding variables (e.g., attitude measures at the beginning of the program) and/or using other statistical techniques (e.g., path analysis) is indicated.

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Table 1

Model Variables and Coefficients for Student-Centered Attitude at End of Program (EAIS3) Regressed on Teacher-Centered Attitude at End of Program (EAIT3) and Personal Teaching Efficacy at End of Program (EFFP3)

Multiple R	.548	F	15.262
R Square	.301	Significance of F	.000
Adjusted R Square	.281		
Standard Error	3.604		

Analysis of Variance

	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
Regression	3	407.757	135.919
Residual	70	911.229	13.018

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
EAIS3	91.014	4.251
EAIT3	31.689	6.342
EFFP3	44.216	5.545

Table 2

Regression Coefficients for EAIS3 Regressed on EAIT3 and EFFP3

Variable	B	Standard Error B	Beta	T	Significance of T
EAIT3	-.218	.067	-.326	-3.283	.002
EFFP3	.334	.076	.436	4.392	.000

Table 1
Correlation Matrix: Student Teaching Performance, Practicum Performance, Educational Attitude, Efficacy, SES of School, School Context

	STPER	PPER	EAIT1	EAIT2	EAIT3	EAIS1	EAIS2	EAIS3	EFFT1	EFFT2	EFFT3
STPER	1.000	.273**	- .046	- .191	- .231*	.589	.137	.065	.069	.131	.101
PRACPER	.273**	1.000	- .304**	- .301**	- .320**	.133	.112	.172	.195	.240*	.245*
EAIT1	- .046	- .304**	1.000	.573**	.506**	- .356**	- .268**	- .249*	- .324**	- .073	- .269**
EAIT2	- .191	- .309**	.573**	1.000	.605**	- .227*	- .491**	- .296**	- .157	- .337**	- .256*
EAIT3	- .231*	- .320**	.506**	.605**	1.000	- .152	- .282*	- .287**	- .339**	- .152	- .270**
EAIS1	.059	.133	- .356**	- .227*	- .152	1.000	.491**	.371**	- .044	.048	.078
EAIS2	.137	.112	- .269*	- .491**	- .282**	.491**	1.000	.498**	- .043	.092	.034
EAIS3	.061	.172	- .249*	- .296**	- .287**	.376**	.498**	1.000	.004	.129	.153
EFFT1	.069	.195	- .324**	- .157	- .339**	- .044	- .043	.004	1.000	.178	.301**
EFFT2	.134	.240*	- .073	- .337**	- .151	.048	.092	.129	.178	1.000	.472**
EFFT3	.101	.245	- .269**	- .256*	- .270**	.078	.034	.153	.301**	.472**	1.000
EFFP1	- .218*	- .023	.132	.202*	.153	.173	.005	.165	.064	- .022	- .121
EFFP2	- .062	- .089	.009	- .203*	- .043	.310**	.353**	.319**	.051	.224*	.006
EFFP3	.034	.151	- .217*	- .298**	- .140	.392**	.440**	.462**	.031	.322**	.197*
PSES	.137	- .207*	.126	.012	.196	.190	.170	.160	- .136	.036	- .087
STSES	.291*	.057	- .089	- .150	- .084	.039	.277**	.187	- .142	.060	- .048
PCXT	- .010	.213*	.157	.122	- .076	- .207*	- .126	- .163	.175	.048	.035
STCXT	.065	- .073	.131	.159	- .046	.058	- .139	.123	- .017	.060	.070

* - Signif. LE .05
** - Signif. LE .01

Table 1 (Cont.)
Correlation Matrix: Student Teaching Performance, Practicum Performance, Educational Attitude, Efficacy, SES of School, School Context

	EFFP1	EFFP2	EFFP3	WSES	SSES	WTCXT	STCXT
STHPER	- .217*	- .060	.034	- .137	.291	- .011	.065
PPER	- .023	- .089	.151	- .207*	.057	.213*	- .073
EAIT1	.132	.008	- .217*	.126	- .089	.157	.131
EAIT2	.202*	- .203*	- .298**	.012	- .150	.122	.159
EAIT3	.153	- .043	- .140	.196	- .084	- .076	- .046
EAIS1	.173	.310**	.392**	.190	.038	- .207*	.058
EAIS2	.005	.353**	.440**	.170	.278**	- .126	- .139
EAIS3	.165	.319*	.462**	.159	.187	- .163	.123
EFFT1	.064	.051	.031	- .136	- .142	.175	- .017
EFFT2	- .022	.224*	.322**	.036	.060	.048	.060
EFFT3	- .121	.001	.197*	- .037	- .048	.035	.070
EFFP1	1.000	.350**	.255**	- .046	- .077	.082	.126
EFFP2	.350**	1.000	.536**	.215*	.121	- .075	- .004
EFFP3	.255**	.536**	1.000	.151	.193	- .247*	.089
WSES	- .046	.215*	.131	1.000	.123	- .345**	.120
SSES	- .077	.121	.193	.123	1.000	- .127	- .158
WTOTCXT	.082	- .075	- .247*	.345	- .127	1.000	- .045
STOTCXT	.126	- .004	.089	.119	- .159	- .045	1.000

* - Signif. LE .05
** - Signif. LE .01

Figure 1
Models Tested by Backward Elimination Multiple Regression Analysis

[1]Dependent Variables	Independent Variables					
PRACPER	[2]PRACSES	[3]EAIT2	EAIS2	EFFT2	EFFP2	[4]PCRACXT
STPER	[5]STSES	EAIT2	EAIS2	EFFT2	EFFP2	[6]STCXT
EAIS3	STSES	STCXT	EAIS3	EFFT3	EFFP3	
EAIT3	STSES	STCXT	EAIT3	EFFT3	EFFP3	
EFFT3	STSES	STCXT	EAIT3	EAIS3	EFFP3	
EFFP3	STSES	STCXT	EAIT3	EAIS3	EFFT3	

1 Practicum Performance; Student Teaching Performance; Student-Centered Educational Attitude (at end of program); Teaching Efficacy (at end of program); Personal Teaching Efficacy (at end of program)

2 Practicum SES
3 2 = administration prior to practicum
4 Practicum Context
5 Student Teaching SES
6 Student Teaching Context

Table 3

Model Variables and Coefficients for Practicum Performance (PRACPER) Regressed on Practicum SES (PRACSES), Practicum Context (PRACCXT), Personal Teaching Efficacy (EFfP3), and Teacher-Centered Attitude (EAIT3)

Multiple R	.567	F	8.866
R Square	.321	Significance of F	.0000
Adjusted R Square	.285		
Standard Error	2.643		

Analysis of Variance

	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
Regression	4	247.675	61.919
Residual	75	523.812	6.984

Variabale	Mean	Std. Dev.
PRACPER	93.862	3.125
PRACSES	15.037	18.033
PRACCXT	36.925	4.333
EFFP3	44.325	5.440
EAIT3	31.650	6.469

Table 4

Regression Coefficients for PRACPER Regressed on PSES, PCXT, EFFP3, EAIT3

Variable	B	Standard Error B	Beta	T	Significance of T
PRACSES	-.032	.018	-.185	-1.800	.076
PRACCTXT	.159	.075	.220	2.179	.037
EFFP3	.164	.057	.285	2.898	.005
EAIT3	-.169	.047	-.349	-3.594	.001

Table 5

Model Variables and Coefficients for Student Teaching Performance (STPER) Regressed on Student Teaching SES (STES) and Teacher-Centered Attitude (EAIT3)

Multiple R	.296	F	3.399
R Square	.087	Significance of F	.039
Adjusted R Square	.062		
Standard Error	2.519		

Analysis of Variance

	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
Regression	2	43.142	21.571
Residual	71	450.642	6.347

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev
STPER	96.054	2.601
STSES	14.230	19.360
EAIT3	31.689	6.342

Table 6

Regression Coefficients for STPER Regressed on STSES and EAIT3

Variable	B	Standard Error B	Beta	T	Significance of T
STSES	.030	.015	.220	1.940	.056
EAIT3	-.082	.046	-.199	-1.759	.083